

Witness Name: William Wright

Statement No.: WITN2287019

Exhibits: WITN2287020 –

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Dated: 15th April 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

EXHIBIT WITN2287026

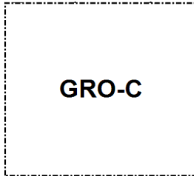


SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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Mr Bill Wright



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Your ref:

Our ref: NQH23/1/1

Date: 24 October 2000

Dear Mr Wright

Susan Deacon MSP, Minister for Health and Community Care, commissioned a fact-finding exercise into heat treatment of blood products in Scotland in the mid 1980s after listening to public concern that haemophiliacs might have been exposed to risk of infection from Hepatitis C in Scotland longer than they should have been. She also undertook to consider whether any further action might be warranted after she had considered the report. I now enclose a copy of that report.

Ms Deacon announced today that she has accepted the conclusions of the report that:

- the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service were around 18 months behind the Bio Products Laboratory in England in producing a heat-treated product which was subsequently found to have eliminated the hepatitis C virus;
- there were understandable technical reasons why this was the case:
 - there was no test to identify the presence of the virus, so scientists could not be sure that any particular heat treatment had actually worked until they reviewed the effects of the resultant products on patients;
 - the heating process could easily render blood products unusable, and different types of heating and freeze-drying processes and equipment had to be tried in order to obtain a usable product;
- once SNBTS had managed to develop a suitable heat-treated product, they were quickly able to produce sufficient for domestic demand.

The Minister considers it an important general principle that the NHS should not pay compensation for non-negligent harm; she acknowledges that medical treatment often necessarily involves a balance of risks. She would like to repeat her expressions of sympathy to haemophiliacs infected through blood products, as indeed to all people who have suffered inadvertent harm through medical treatment.

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She also notes that the exercise failed to find evidence of any policy by Haemophilia Centre Directors deliberately to mislead patients about the risks of hepatitis. She cannot deal with individual cases where a patient believes he or she was nevertheless misled, although she sympathises with any patient who was unable for whatever reason to appreciate the risks of their treatment.

The Report of the fact-finding exercise will be available on Scottish Health on the Web (SHOW) website www.show.scot.nhs.uk or further copies can be obtained by contacting David Bell at the above address on Tel: **GRO-C** or Fax: **GRO-C** E-mail: david.bell@ **GRO-C**

Copies of the main written submissions used in the exercise may be examined at the Scottish Executive Library at Saughton House. They have been made available to MSPs, to the Haemophilia Society, to SNBTS and to the Directors of the Haemophilia Centres. The Department will make copies available to others if requested, on payment of a charge of £13.50 to cover the costs of photocopying because of the volume of material.

The Executive is very grateful to all who contributed to this exercise, with information and opinions.

The Minister considers it is important now to improve understanding of the prevention and treatment of Hepatitis C, which affects many different kinds of people. The Scottish Needs Assessment Programme Report on Hepatitis C was published on 28 September and she wants to consider how to progress this. The Report covers epidemiology, prevention, investigations, and treatment and future implications for the Scottish population and service needs.

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

SP
SANDRA FALCONER (MRS)

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